

The President's Weekly Address

September 13, 2014

As Commander in Chief, my highest priority is the security of the American people. And I've made it clear that those who threaten the United States will find no safe haven. Thanks to our military and counterterrorism professionals, we took out Usama bin Laden, much of Al Qaida's leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and leaders of Al Qaida affiliates in Yemen and Somalia. We've prevented terrorist attacks, saved American lives, and made our homeland more secure.

Today, the terrorist threat is more diffuse, from Al Qaida affiliates and other extremists, like ISIL in Syria and Iraq. As I said this week, our intelligence community has not yet detected specific ISIL plots against our homeland. But its leaders have repeatedly threatened the United States. And if left unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond the Middle East, including to the United States. So we're staying vigilant. And we're moving ahead with our strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy this terrorist organization.

To meet a threat like this, we have to be smart. We have to use our power wisely. And we have to avoid the mistakes of the past. American military power is unmatched, but this can't be America's fight alone. And the best way to defeat a group like ISIL isn't by sending a large number of American combat forces to wage a ground war in the heart of the Middle East. That wouldn't serve our interests. In fact, it would only risk fueling extremism even more.

What's needed now is a targeted, relentless counterterrorism campaign against ISIL that combines American air power, contributions from allies and partners, and more support to forces that are fighting these terrorists on the ground. And that's exactly what we're doing.

We're moving ahead with our campaign of airstrikes against these terrorists, and we're prepared to take action against ISIL in Syria as well. The additional American forces I've ordered to Iraq will help Iraqi and Kurdish forces with the training, intelligence, and equipment they need to take the fight to these terrorists on the ground. We're working with Congress to expand our efforts to train and equip the Syrian opposition. We'll continue to strengthen our defenses here at home. And we'll keep providing the humanitarian relief to help Iraqi civilians who have been driven from their homes and who remain in extreme danger.

Because we're leading the right way, more nations are joining our coalition. This week, Arab nations agreed to strengthen their support for the new Iraqi Government and to do their part in the fight against ISIL, including aspects of the military campaign. Saudi Arabia will join the effort to help train and equip moderate Syrian opposition forces. And retired Marine General John Allen, who during the Iraq war worked with Sunnis in Iraq as they fought to reclaim their communities from terrorists, will serve as our Special Envoy to help build and coordinate our growing coalition.

Today, every American can be proud of our men and women in uniform who are serving in this effort. When our airstrikes helped break the siege of the Iraq town of Amerli, one Kurdish fighter on the ground said, "It would have been absolutely impossible without the American planes." One resident of that city said, "Thank you, America."

Today, we're showing the world the best of American leadership. We will protect our people. We will stand with partners who defend their countries and rally other nations to meet

a common threat. And here at home, 13 years after our country was attacked, we continue to stand tall and proud, because we are Americans and we don't give in to fear. We carry on. And we will never waver in the defense of the country that we love.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:45 p.m. on September 12 in the State Dining Room at the White House for broadcast on September 13. In the address, the President referred to Gen. John R. Allen, USMC (Ret.), Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition To Counter ISIL. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 12, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on September 13.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Allen, John R.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Iraq : International diplomatic efforts; Iraq : Iraqi military and security forces; Iraq : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization; Iraq : Reconciliation efforts; Iraq : Security cooperation with U.S.; Iraq : U.S. assistance; Iraq : U.S. military detachment; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; White House Office : Global Coalition To Counter ISIL, Special Presidential Envoy for the.

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